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Chair: Ms. Martinic ..... (Argentina)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Opening of the session

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I declare open the 2017 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

(*spoke in English*)

The Disarmament Commission was established in 1978 at the tenth special session of the General Assembly to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the area of disarmament and to follow up the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session devoted to disarmament. Since its establishment, the Commission has been able to produce 16 sets of key recommendations, guidelines and principles ranging from objective information on military matters to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, to name just two.

The 2017 session of the Commission represents the last phase of the current three-year cycle. The Commission is expected to complete the work of the two Working Groups by agreeing on consensus documents on their respective agenda items — the first recommendations being for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the second for practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

I encourage delegations to fully participate in the discussions in the two Working Groups, listen to one another's concerns with an open mind and try to see others' interests as their own. In my humble opinion, that is the only way to foster the mutual understanding needed to address the issues before us. Nuclear disarmament and confidence-building are at the core of international peace and security. I am confident that member States will be up to their responsibility to make full use of this body to help achieve the very basic but necessary common ground that we need in the area of disarmament.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

On behalf of all the members of the Commission, before we discuss the first item on the agenda, I would like to warmly welcome Mr. Kim Won-soo, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs at the Office for Disarmament Affairs. I would like to thank and welcome him and his team for the great support they will be providing to the Commission during this session.

It gives me pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Kim Won-soo.

Mr. Kim Won-soo: I thank you, Madam Chair, for the kind words addressed to my Office. At the outset, I would like to start with three things.

The first is to thank you, Madam, for accepting what is, as you said, the challenging task of concluding this session of the Disarmament Commission. The second is to thank the departing Chair, Ambassador Odo Tevi of Vanuatu, for his dedicated stewardship of last year's session and the intersessional consultations

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that followed it. And the third is to thank the departing Chairs of the two Working Groups, Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, now Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, and Mr. Bouchaib Eloumni of Morocco, both of whom skilfully presided over the Groups' work during the past two sessions. They have now taken on prominent new assignments, which I believe they fully deserve.

The year 2017 is the final year of this body's three-year cycle. The Commission is expected to complete the work of its two Working Groups and provide recommendations to the General Assembly. This year also marks 65 years since the first Disarmament Commission was established by the General Assembly. Its mission was to address the international community's anxiety at the general lack of confidence plaguing the world and leading to the burden of increasing armaments. This mission is valid now more than ever. We are witnessing rising global and regional tensions; new and destabilizing arms competitions in both strategic and conventional weapons; worrying policy trends that threaten to roll back the gains made since the end of the Cold War; and a dearth of outcomes from disarmament institutions, including this body. We need to work harder to reverse these trends.

We have seen the emergence of new technologies with the potential to have a negative impact on international peace and security. They include both high-end weapons systems and new applications for the revolutionary technologies that have primarily been pursued by both private and academic sectors. From cybersecurity and artificial intelligence to hypersonic missiles, these new technologies also create a double blurring of the line, both between strategic and non-strategic weapons and between nuclear and non-nuclear conventional weapons.

Addressing these new trends requires a comprehensive approach. In this connection, our goals have always been broader than eliminating or restricting single categories of weapons. Disarmament was meant as an integrated approach to address the larger problem of war and to facilitate arrangements for the collective maintenance of international security. This is the logic around which the concept of general and complete disarmament is built. Creating a new paradigm for sustainable security requires looking at how to modernize the concept of general and complete disarmament in the twenty-first century.

This is the approach also taken by the original Disarmament Commission. This session has an opportunity to revitalize this approach by considering the recommendations of the two Working Groups holistically, as mutually reinforcing elements of a greater whole. As the only universal deliberative body, the Commission can, through its inclusive engagement and with a willingness to seek compromise and exercise flexibility, make a meaningful contribution to the revitalization of general and complete disarmament.

Now I would like to turn to the issues related to outer space. It is an area that is especially ripe for consideration. Its recent history is promising. The Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities, established by the General Assembly at Russia's initiative in 2012, successfully concluded its work in 2013. The subsequent General Assembly resolution 70/53 was jointly sponsored by China, the Russian Federation and the United States — a rare display of unity on a strategic issue of such magnitude.

The First and Fourth Committee held their first-ever ad hoc meeting on addressing the challenges of outer space security and sustainability in October 2015. The meeting showed how much work remains to be done to reconcile competing views. Nevertheless, it provided a useful opportunity to debate these differences and search for common ground.

I sincerely appreciate the efforts made by former Chairs — Ambassadors Drobnjak of Croatia, Seck of Senegal and Tevi of Vanuatu — to bring this issue before the Commission and for deepening the discussions and cooperation between the communities concerned with the safety and security of outer space efforts. I also commend the flexibility shown by all States in allowing this to happen. Achieving the implementation of outer space transparency and confidence-building measures would be an indispensable step towards the prevention of an arms race in outer space. As outer space is our common heritage, the issue deserves to be addressed in a universal body.

In February, the Secretary-General issued a report (A/72/65) on the implementation of outer space transparency and confidence-building measures by the United Nations system. We hope that the report and the gaps it identifies will serve as a practical guide for representatives' informal discussions. Those discussions may help us to explore various

ideas to ensure that space remains free of conflict and unsustainable practices. I look forward to productive deliberations on the issue.

I would like to conclude by noting that there are high expectations for progress in 2017, including from this body. A number of important events are taking place this year, especially for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Disarmament Commission falls exactly in the middle of two of them: the negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, and the commencement of the crucial 2020 review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We therefore have good opportunities for action on numerous fronts in a busy disarmament agenda. Success in the deliberations of the Commission can set a positive tone and provide new impetus for achieving progress in our collective efforts to strengthen disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

I wish delegations the best for a fruitful session.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Kim for his statement.

Adoption of the provisional agenda for the 2017 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): Members of the Commission may recall that, at its organizational session on 13 February, the Commission took note of the provisional agenda for the 2017 substantive session, as contained in document A/CN.10/L.78.

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the agenda as contained in document A/CN.10/L.78.

The agenda was adopted.

Election of other officers

As members will recall, the Commission has yet to elect six Vice-Chairs and a Rapporteur from regional groups. I was informed that consultations are still ongoing within the Group of African States on possible candidates for the posts of Vice-Chairs. Therefore, we will take up the election of Vice-Chairs from this Group at a later stage.

At the same time, I am pleased to inform the Commission of the following endorsements it has received. The Group of Eastern European States has endorsed the candidatures of Ms. Anda Grinberga, First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Latvia, and Ms. Rosita Šorytė, Minister Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Lithuania, as Vice-Chairs from the Group of Eastern European States.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has endorsed the candidature of Ms. Asha Challenger, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda, as Vice-Chair from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. The Group of Asia-Pacific States has endorsed the candidatures of Mr. Yasar Ammar, Second Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Pakistan, as Vice-Chair, and of Mr. Seyed Robatjazi, First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as Rapporteur from the Group of Asia Pacific States.

If there are no objections, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect by acclamation Ms. Asha Challenger of Antigua and Barbuda, Ms. Anda Grinberga of Latvia, Ms. Rosita Šorytė of Lithuania and Mr. Yassar Amar of Pakistan as Vice-Chairs, and Mr. Seyed Robatjazi of the Islamic Republic of Iran as Rapporteur of the Commission for the 2017 substantive session.

It was so decided.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Commission, allow me warmly to congratulate the newly elected members of the Bureau and wish them success in the discharge of their duties. I am sure that they will make an important contribution to the smooth operation of the Commission this year. I would like to thank them in advance for their support and counsel.

It is my understanding that there is general agreement on the candidatures of the Working Group Chairs. If there are no objections, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect by acclamation Mr. Wilmer Méndez, Minister-Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as Chair of Working Group I, and Ms. Lachezara Stoeva, Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Representative of Bulgaria, as Chair of Working Group II.

It was so decided.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): Once again, on behalf of the Commission I should like to congratulate the Chairs of the Working Groups. I am grateful to them for taking up the challenge of presiding over their

respective groups in this final year of considering the issue. I am quite certain that they will carry out their tasks with wisdom.

Organization of work

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I should now like to draw the Commission's attention to the draft schedule of meetings, as contained in document A/CN.10/2017/CRP.1, which was circulated previously, and which has also been distributed this morning in the room. As members will have noted, three plenary meetings have been scheduled for the general exchange of views. A further 11 meetings have been allocated for each Working Group on an equitable basis. As members will recall, this schedule is based on the practice of previous years in which we allocated the number of meetings for each Working Group. By the same token, keeping in mind the need to make the best use of time and resources available to us, it is deemed appropriate to return to the practice of having a plenary session of the Commission halfway through the session in order to provide an opportunity to hear how the Working Groups are proceeding. That will prove useful for all delegations, in particular the smallest of them.

Moreover, and as members will recall, pursuant to resolution 71/82 the Commission will hold informal discussions on transparency- and confidence-building measures in outer space tentatively during the second and third weeks of our discussions. In that regard, I would like to draw the Commission's attention to the issue of the utilization factor and to share with members some numbers regarding the Commission's level of efficiency in the use of conference service.

As members are aware, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/9, intergovernmental bodies such as the Commission are mandated to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources. The average utilization factor of the Commission for the past 10 years has been 66 per cent. I repeat: the average utilization factor of the Commission for the past 10 years has been 66 per cent, which is below the 80 per cent benchmark. The good news is that the utilization factor last year stood at 76 per cent, which is much closer to the benchmark. I hope that members will join me in committing ourselves to do our best to ensure that the Commission optimizes its use of conference resources. That includes, inter alia, commencing and adjourning the meetings on time and using to the fullest extent possible all the time allocated for our meetings.

May I take it that the Commission wishes to take note of the schedule of meetings, as contained in document A/CN.10/2017/CRP.1?

It was so decided.

General debate

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): The Commission will now start the general exchange of views, based on the list of speakers inscribed for the general debate. I would urge those delegations that have not yet done so to enter their names on the list as soon as possible, as we plan to conclude the general debate tomorrow at 1 p.m.

In order to maximize the time available to us during the general exchange of views segment, I propose that we maintain the practice of using a rolling list of speakers, which is currently open to all delegations wishing to take the floor. I would also like to remind all delegations already inscribed on the list to keep in mind that a rolling list implies that they should be prepared to make their statement at any time, possibly sooner than the originally scheduled time.

I would also like to remind delegations that we will follow the established format for the length of statements, that is, 15 minutes for delegations speaking on behalf of groups and 10 minutes for delegations making statements in their national capacity.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM).

First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Madam, on your election for this substantive session, and the Vice-Chairs and Chairs of the Working Groups on the assumption of their duties. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Ambassador of Vanuatu, Mr. Odo Tevi, who chaired the Commission in 2016, the previous Vice-Chairs, as well as the previous Working Group Chairs from Morocco and Kazakhstan, for their efforts in last year's substantive session. And I thank Mr. Kim Won-soo, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his briefing, which provided us with information on what to expect in future. NAM assures the Chair of its full cooperation in what it hopes will be a productive session with positive outcomes. NAM underscores its long-standing position regarding the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and

expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle for negotiation in those areas. In that regard, the Movement reaffirms the relevance and centrality of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), with universal membership, as the sole specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, to consider specific disarmament issues and submit concrete recommendations to the General Assembly.

The UNDC has contributed to the field of disarmament and arms control by adopting 16 guidelines, recommendations and declarations. NAM is concerned about the fact that the UNDC has been unable to agree to substantive recommendations on its agenda items since 2000 owing to a lack of political will and to the inflexible positions of the nuclear-weapon States. We stress the urgent need for achieving concrete results in the current UNDC cycle and, to that end, we urge all Member States, in particular nuclear-weapon States, to show the needed political will and flexibility. The Movement stands ready to cooperate actively and constructively with all parties in order to reach agreement on the substantive recommendations on the Commission's agenda items.

NAM reiterates its deep concern over the lack of progress in the implementation of nuclear-disarmament obligations and commitments by the nuclear-weapon States. It urges them to fully eliminate their nuclear arsenals, in accordance with the relevant multilateral legal obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), contracted during the NPT Review Conferences, unequivocally undertaken in the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and further reiterated in the 2010 Review Conference. NAM asserts the continued validity of these obligations and commitments until they are fulfilled.

NAM stresses that progress on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects is essential to strengthening international peace and security. In that context, the Movement stresses that nuclear disarmament, as the highest priority established by the tenth special session of the General Assembly and as a multilateral legal obligation, should not be made conditional on confidence-building measures, non-proliferation efforts or strategic stability.

The Movement underlines that General Assembly resolution 68/32 and its most recent version, resolution 71/71, entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament", provides a concrete road map for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament through the urgent commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons.

NAM reiterates that the United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament, to be convened no later than 2018, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions, would indeed provide the General Assembly with an opportunity to review progress made in nuclear disarmament and to make concrete recommendations in order to maintain the momentum created by the 2013 high-level meeting and to intensify international efforts towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. NAM proposes the establishment of a preparatory committee for the United Nations high-level international conference in New York.

The Movement stresses the importance of enhancing public awareness of the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the need for their total elimination by observing 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

NAM affirms the importance of humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons and in promoting the goal of nuclear disarmament. The Movement expresses its deepest concern over the immediate, indiscriminate and massive death and destruction caused by any nuclear weapon detonation and their long-term catastrophic consequences for human health, the environment and other vital economic resources, endangering the lives of present and future generations. In that context, we reaffirm the need for all States to strictly comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law. NAM recalls the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996 (A/51/218, annex), and supports substantive discussions on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

NAM also affirms the urgent need for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional, non-discriminatory and legally binding instrument to effectively assure all nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances — as a matter of high priority, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use.

The Movement underlines that all activities and plans related to improving existing nuclear weapons and developing new types of nuclear weapons contradict the objective of achieving nuclear disarmament as a multilateral legal obligation, as well as the commitments undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States in that regard.

NAM reaffirms the importance of the application by nuclear-weapon States of principles of transparency, irreversibility and international verifiability in all measures related to the fulfilment of their nuclear disarmament obligations and undertakings.

NAM reaffirms the inalienable right of each State to research, produce and use nuclear energy, including the sovereign right to develop a full national nuclear fuel cycle for peaceful purposes, without discrimination, and to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

NAM again stresses that proliferation concerns are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements. Non-proliferation control arrangements should be transparent and open to participation by all States, and should not impose restrictions on access to material, equipment and technology required by developing countries for peaceful purposes. The Movement stresses that issues related to proliferation should be resolved through political and diplomatic means. Measures and initiatives taken in that regard should be within the framework of international law and should contribute to the promotion of international peace and security.

NAM States parties to the NPT regret that the ninth NPT Review Conference failed to reach consensus on a final outcome document, despite the efforts made by NAM delegations. That failure should serve as a stimulus to work harder towards achieving nuclear disarmament, the ultimate objective of the NPT. NAM States parties to the NPT stress the importance of fulfilling the commitments made at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences and of implementing the action plans adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference on nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

NAM States parties to the NPT further underline that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which is an integral and essential part of the package of decisions reached without a vote and which enabled the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, should be implemented without any further delay. We stress that the resolution remains valid until its objectives are achieved.

NAM States parties to the NPT express their profound disappointment at the fact that the scheduled 2012 conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East did not convene, despite the consensus decision of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. That runs contrary to the letter and spirit of the 1995 resolution and violates the collective agreement reached at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. NAM States parties to the NPT stress that the commitments and obligations of the Treaty depositaries regarding the zone, as contained in the 1995 resolution and the 2010 action plan, remain valid until fulfilled. They strongly reject the impediments alleged by the conveners of the Conference as reasons for not holding it on schedule. In that context, NAM States parties to the NPT deplore the fact that Israel is the only party in the Middle East that has refused to participate in the Conference, as mandated in the 2010 Review Conference. NAM States parties to the NPT call for the full and immediate implementation of the 1995 resolution and the 2010 action plan on the Middle East so as to avoid negative repercussions for the effectiveness and credibility of the NPT, its review process and the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime as a whole.

In that regard, NAM recalls that, in the final document of the September 2016 NAM Summit on Margarita Island, the Heads of State and Government, while strongly supporting the establishment of a nuclear-weapon free zone in the Middle East, called on all parties concerned to take urgent and practical steps for the establishment of such a zone and, pending its establishment, demanded that Israel, the only country in the region that has not joined the NPT or declared its intention to do so, to renounce its possession of nuclear weapons, to accede to the NPT without preconditions or further delay, to promptly place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and to conduct its nuclear related activities in conformity with the non-proliferation regime.

The Heads of State and Government also expressed great concern about Israel's acquisition of nuclear capabilities, which poses a serious and continuing threat to the security of neighbouring and other States, and condemned Israel for continuing to develop and

stockpile nuclear arsenals. They also called for the total and complete prohibition of the transfer of all nuclear-related equipment, information, material, facilities, resources and devices or the provision of assistance in the nuclear-related scientific or technological fields to Israel.

NAM underscores the need for strong and genuine political will in support of the multilateral disarmament machinery, in particular during negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, which is the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body. NAM reiterates its call on the Conference on Disarmament to expeditiously agree on a balanced and comprehensive programme of work, without further delays, in order for it to overcome its long-standing deadlock and to start its substantive work.

In conclusion, the Movement pledges its full support for the UNDC's work, which must be intensified through reinvigorated political will in order to achieve meaningful outcomes to advance global disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the Group of Arab States would like to express its appreciation to you, Madam, for assuming the task of chairing the United Nations Disarmament Commission this year. We congratulate you and express our appreciation to Venezuela and Bulgaria, which presided over the two Working Groups.

The Group of Arab States stresses the importance of the Disarmament Commission as an international venue for discussing disarmament issues, in view of the mandate issued by the General Assembly during its tenth special session. The Group underscores that the promotion of peace, security and stability in the world cannot be achieved as long as nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction continue to threaten the planet. It is incumbent upon us to irrevocably rid humankind of such weapons and to channel the enormous financial and material resources spent on them into development.

The Group is concerned over the failure to achieve any tangible progress in nuclear disarmament, the repeated failure in committing to the implementation of the second resolution, adopted at the 1995 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review and Extension Conference of the Parties, as well as the 13 steps adopted by the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons — to which we add the working plan of the 2010 Review Conference.

In that regard, nuclear-weapon States are attempting to avoid setting deadlines for the implementation of those international commitments to rid the world of nuclear weapons. In view of the lack of implementation of the consensual 2010 resolution, the Group of Arab States sought to break the stalemate by making a new proposal in an Arab working group at the most recent NPT review conference in 2015. The constructive proposal received the support of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, but it fell short of its objective.

We were disappointed by the fact that three countries, including two nuclear-weapon States that are signatories to those conventions, blocked international consensus and obstructed the adoption of a final document that would include the Middle East. Such actions raises serious questions about the intentions of those States. We therefore believe that ridding the Middle East region of nuclear weapons is a collective responsibility that should be borne by the international community. The Group of Arab States is committed to that objective, and we are still waiting for other States to follow suit. Otherwise, the credibility of the NPT will be undermined and with it the disarmament machinery and the NPT system.

That is why the Group of Arab States decided to undertake a comprehensive review of various positions over the four decades through a committee of elders to develop an Arab strategy for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Recently, a comprehensive integrated report was presented that included a clear and frank assessment and offered proposals for new policies that would help achieve Arab objectives in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The failure of the recent NPT review conference and the failure of nuclear-weapon States to honour their commitments in the field of nuclear disarmament makes it incumbent on us as an international community to redouble our efforts and to speedily work towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. That was actually achieved last week here, at the New York Headquarters, through the convening of a United Nations negotiating conference seeking an internationally legally binding instrument to eliminate nuclear weapons under General Assembly resolution 71/258, adopted last year.

The Group of Arab States will continue to contribute to international efforts towards nuclear disarmament, in line with article VI of the NPT. The Group works tirelessly by actively participating in all international nuclear-disarmament multilateral forums and will engage actively in the Preparatory Committee's work in May in Vienna, so that we can prepare for the new conference.

All Arab States joined the NPT and submitted all of their facilities to the comprehensive safeguard regimes of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Israel failed to follow suit, despite all international claims and decisions to the contrary. The Group of Arab States stresses that the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is the fourth pillar of the NPT and is no less important than the other three pillars. From 1995 to date, we have failed to make any progress in that regard, despite the fact that the decision was part and parcel of the core element — on the basis of which the 1995 NPT was extended indefinitely.

The practical confidence-building measures, voluntarily adopted, can contribute to the promotion of international peace and security at the regional and international levels. We should recall the guidelines for adequate confidence-building measures and the implementation of such measures at the regional and international levels, as recommended by the Commission and adopted by the General Assembly in 1996.

The Group of Arab States affirms that eliminating weapons of mass destruction is one of the pillars of the confidence-building measures. Therefore, it is very important to implement and operationalize the 1995 decision on declaring the Middle East region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons. The commitments adopted voluntarily by States can contribute to building confidence among States. The Group would like to stress the importance of operationalizing the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in order to enhance the ability of Member States to combat that grave phenomenon. We would also like to stress the importance of the international instrument for tracing small arms and light weapons.

We welcome the final document of the periodic meeting for the implementation of the programme of action, the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, which convened in New York in June. We also look forward to continued international consensus on that important mechanism through the third Review Conference, to be held next year.

In conclusion, the Group of Arab States hopes that this year, the Commission will adopt integrated and comprehensive documents and recommendations to follow the positive measures issuing from the Commission in 1988 and 1999.

Mr. Zamora Rivas (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

At the outset, CELAC congratulates you, Madam Chair, on your election to preside over the 2017 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. We also congratulate the members of the Bureau. We thank Ambassador Odo Tevi of Vanuatu for his tireless efforts as Chair of the Disarmament Commission last year.

CELAC reaffirms the importance of the Commission as the only specialized and deliberative body within the multilateral disarmament machinery of the United Nations. It permits substantive debate on specific related issues with a view to presenting concrete recommendations to the General Assembly. CELAC reaffirms its readiness to work constructively to discharge the complex duties entrusted to the Commission.

CELAC recalls the historic decision of the Heads of States and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean, gathered in Havana for the second CELAC summit, formally declaring Latin America and the Caribbean to be a zone of peace and reaffirming our permanent commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts so as to definitively stamp out the use and threat of use of force in our region.

We reiterate our grave concern about the threat that nuclear weapons represent for the survival of humankind. We condemn its use or threat of use and deplore its potential humanitarian impact. We stress that nuclear weapons should never be used in any circumstance and that their use or threat of use is a crime against humanity and a violation of international law. Consequently, the only effective guarantee against

their use or threat of use are prohibition and total elimination in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner, with a clearly defined timetable.

We reaffirm the urgent need to advance towards the primary objective of general and complete disarmament under strict international control if we are to succeed in the complete prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. In that connenction, CELAC welcomes the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/258. We reiterate our intention to participate actively in negotiating a universal and legally binding instrument that bans nuclear weapons in a transparent, irreversible and verifiable manner in the context of a multilaterally agreed timetable that leads to their complete elimination.

CELAC member States urge all countries to work towards the expeditious adoption and negotiation of such a universal and legally binding instrument. It is in the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States, including the 33 States members of CELAC, to obtain unambiguous legally binding assurances from nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

We celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the adoption of the Declaration of the States members of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. This meeting reaffirms the support and cooperation among member States to continue to work together towards global nuclear disarmament, in keeping with the mandate of Heads of State and Government of CELAC.

We deeply regret the lack of consensus in the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Furthermore, the provisions on nuclear disarmament contained in the draft outcome document did not meet the expectations of CELAC member States. We consider them to be regressive when compared to outcome documents from previous review conferences. We reaffirm the commitment of CELAC member States to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the full implementation of its three fundamental pillars — nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We once again voice our support for the inalienable right of States to develop the research, production and peaceful use of nuclear energy without discrimination, in keeping with articles 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Treaty.

CELAC stresses the importance of the universalization of the NPT. As such, it urges States that have not yet become signatories to do so as non-nuclear-weapon States. It calls on nuclear-weapon States to honour their commitments under article VI of the Treaty and to move towards the total elimination of such weapons. CELAC reiterates that the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is urgently needed and urges annex 2 States that have not signed or ratified it to do so as soon as possible.

CELAC is convinced that practical confidence-building measures for conventional weapons play a vital role in promoting understanding and transparency among States, and contribute to their stability and security We therefore invite States Members of the United Nations to strengthen, improve and broaden confidence-building measures at all levels, when applicable.

We also reaffirm the key role of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in recognition of its significant contribution to efforts in that sphere. We underscore the need for its complete and effective implementation. We must continue working multilaterally in the framework of the Programme of Action, in a transparent and non-discriminatory fashion, and advancing towards the adoption of legally binding instruments on the marking, tracing and illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons so as to prevent their diversion to illegal markets.

CELAC hopes that the Arms Trade Treaty, the first legally binding instrument on arms trade, can help us effectively address the serious consequences of illegal trafficking and non-regulated trade of such weapons for many people and States, particularly through the transfer of weapons to non-State actors or non-authorized users often linked to transnational organized crime. Similarly, we hope that the Treaty can also help prevent conflict, armed violence and violations of international law.

With regard to anti-personnel mines, CELAC recognizes the valuable assistance of the United Nations Mine Action Service. We underline the importance of cooperation in demining efforts and providing

assistance to the victims, and hope that the success of recent years will continue.

CELAC supports international efforts to reduce the suffering caused by cluster munitions and to eliminate their use against civilian populations, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. We also acknowledge Cuba's recent accession to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and Palau's ratification of it in April 2016, as well as the establishment of a zone free of cluster munitions in Central America.

CELAC urges all members of the Conference on Disarmament to demonstrate political will to ensure the start without further delays of substantive work by adopting and implementing a balanced and comprehensive programme of work on the nuclear-disarmament agenda, including the negotiation of a treaty on nuclear weapons; a universal, unconditional and legally binding agreement on negative security assurances, as well as on the prevention of weapons in outer space, and a non-discriminatory treaty to prohibit the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

In conclusion, the Community wishes to underscore the important work done by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the assistance it provides to countries of the region to implement disarmament measures in several areas. The Community regrets the fact that the Disarmament Commission has not succeeded in providing recommendations in 18 years. We call on Member States to show the flexibility and political will we need to move forward with our recommendations. CELAC reaffirms its willingness to cooperate with members of the Commission to achieve concrete results during this session.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

The African Group congratulates you, Madam Chair, on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission at this session, and takes this opportunity to congratulate other members of the Bureau on their election. We would also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Odo Tevi of Vanuatu, for his hard work as Chair of the 2016 substantive session.

The Group appreciates the efforts of the Chairs of the two Working Groups and looks forward to working with them during this session. The Group also expresses its appreciation to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Kim Won-soo, for his remarks this morning.

The African Group aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries by the representative of Indonesia, and restates its continued commitment to the principle and validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Group underlines that disarmament and proliferation issues are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements.

The African Group continues to underscore the importance and the relevance of the Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. The Group believes that, despite some challenges, the Commission has positively contributed in the past to deliberations on nuclear disarmament, as the highest global priorities on disarmament, as well as on issues related to nuclear non-proliferation, arms control, conventional weapons and other confidence-building measures in the field of multilateral disarmament. The Group, however, expresses regret that the Disarmament Commission has not been able to succeed during its previous cycle due to the lack of political will and its inflexible position.

Nuclear weapons remain the only weapons of massive destruction yet to be prohibited. They remain a pressing and existential threat to humankind, and their use constitutes a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of norms of human civilization, as well as a crime against humanity. The Group considers any doctrine justifying their use or threat of use to be unacceptable and unjustifiable. It also recalls the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (A/51/218, annex), which affirms that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law.

The Group is very concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and reaffirms that any such use would be a violation of the Charter of the United Nations. It is in that spirit that we welcome the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/258, entitled "Taking forward

multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations", by which Member States would convene a diplomatic conference from 27 to 30 March and from 15 June to 7 July with the aim of negotiating a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons leading to their total elimination. The Group views the conference as a rare opportunity to right the wrongs of the past perpetrated through the use of nuclear weapons and urges all States to support this process.

The African Group wishes to state that the establishment of a treaty banning nuclear weapons will not undermine the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and other multilateral disarmament efforts, but will rather help to complement and strengthen the NPT. The African Group would like to stress once again the need to universalize the NPT and to ensure compliance in the balanced and comprehensive manner with each of the three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In this regard, the Group reaffirms the inalienable rights of States to the development, research, production and peaceful use of nuclear energy without discrimination and in conformity with article IV of the NPT.

In March, the first preparatory committee meeting of the NPT will kick off as part of activities leading to the tenth review conference of States parties to the NPT in 2020. It is hoped that the conference will serve as an opportunity to strengthen the NPT by truly reinforcing its three pillars. Africa remains committed to promoting its overall objectives and calls on other State parties, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to fulfil their disarmament obligations and their irrevocable undertaking towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The Group regrets that the ninth NPT Review Conference of 2015 could not achieve consensus on the final outcome document.

The African Group views the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone as constituting an important measure towards achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. Therefore, the Group wishes to restate its position, as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, by the entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba on 15 July 2009. Our States will continue to honour and observe this status.

The African Group seizes this opportunity to encourage the remaining States yet to ratify, particularly the States contemplated in Protocol III, to take all necessary measures to ensure its speedy application. The Group continues to stress that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones constitutes an important milestone towards achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

The Group unequivocally supports the call for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It continues to express deep dissatisfaction at the failure to implement as agreed the commitments and obligations of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and the action plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference regarding the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. It is very disappointed at the fact that the conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which should have been held in 2012, was not convened as mandated. In this regard, the commitment and obligation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which remains an integral and essential part of the package and the basis upon which consensus was reached on the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, as well as related measures of the action plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, remain valid until the establishment of this zone.

The African Group wishes also to highlight the goal of General Assembly resolution 71/71, entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament", as an integral part of the overall objective of a nuclear-free world and calls for its effective implementation. The Group reiterates the need for a high-level international conference to be convened no later than 2018. The Group believes that this conference will serve as an opportunity for the General Assembly to make concrete recommendations with a view to maintaining the momentum of the high-level meeting held at the General Assembly in 2013, as well as intensify international efforts to ensure a nuclear-free world.

Having observed the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in September 2016, the African Group wishes to highlight the importance of achieving universal adherence to this instrument bearing in mind the special responsibility of nuclear-weapon States in this regard and to encourage the remaining annex 2 States, in particular nuclear-weapon States, to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay in order to

ensure its entry into force. The African Group reaffirms the importance of the Conference on Disarmament, not only as the single multilateral negotiation body on disarmament issues, but one that should work to end the deadlock in nuclear-disarmament negotiations. The Group reiterates the urgent need for the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and to work towards the realization of the objective established in the negotiations.

Regarding the issue of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, the Group wishes to underline that in pursuit of the objective to contribute to international peace and security, confidence-building measures should be undertaken in full conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The African Group acknowledges the efforts of States parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) since its entry into force, as well as the second conference of the State parties held in Geneva in 2016. The Group calls for the appropriate implementation of the ATT, as the legally binding instrument for the international transfer of conventional weapons, in a balanced and objective manner and one that protects the interests of all States and not just the major international producing and exporting States.

The African Group remains deeply concerned over the illicit trade, transfer, manufacture, possession and circulation of small arms and light weapons and their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, particularly on the continent of Africa. African States have suffered tremendously and disproportionately from the pernicious effects of the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons and the destabilizing effects on the socioeconomic stability of the continent. In this context, the Group remains committed to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The Group welcomes the outcome document of the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action in June 2016 and looks forward to the third review conference in 2018 as an important event. I urge all States to continue to fulfil their obligations regarding reporting technological transfers and by ensuring the unhindered flow of international cooperation and assistance, as stipulated by the Programme of Action.

Finally, the African Group continues to highlight efforts by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa in the context of contribution to disarmament issues and in providing the requisite assistance to States Members of the African Group in the implementation of disarmament, peace and security issues. The Group wishes to stress the need to further strengthen all United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament to allow them to fully discharge their mandate in this regard.

The Group once again regrets that the Disarmament Commission has not been able to make concrete and consensus-based recommendations in its previous cycles. The Group wishes to restate the critical importance of political will and adherence to transparency, including the principle of verifiability, that is, reversibility in disarmament in addressing international disarmament and security issues. The Group appeals for a sustained but meaningful dialogue as we begin deliberations on major issues. I look forward to concrete suggestions towards achieving peace and security for all.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): At the outset, I would like to express our heartfelt condolences to the delegation of the Russian Federation over the deadly explosion in a Saint Petersburg subway station on Monday. We were shocked and deeply saddened by the terrifying news, and we wish strength and courage to the relatives of the deceased and a speedy recovery to the injured.

I congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your unanimous appointment as Chair of the 2017 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Both you and the members of the Bureau can count on Kazakhstan's support to achieve the desired objectives that the Commission was established to achieve in 1978.

I also wish to thank our Ambassador Odo Tevi of Vanuatu for his stewardship last year, which has brought us thus far and with whom we have worked since the start of the first cycle. We commend the leadership of High Representative Kim Won-soo and our appreciation goes to the whole team of the Office of Disarmament Affairs and the Secretariat, whose support and guidance were very important.

In 2015 and 2016, Kazakhstan had the honour to chair Working Group I, on achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and we most sincerely thank all delegations for their unfailing cooperation with us. We are most grateful to Minister

Wilmer Alfonzo Méndez Graterol of Venezuela for taking over the chairship of Working Group I this year, and we are confident he will ably take us to a good conclusion.

As the former Chair of Working Group I, we would like to make some observations about its work. The Disarmament Commission is entering the last phase of its current cycle during a time of deepening divisions within multilateral disarmament bodies, arising from the 2015 NPT Review Conference, our inability to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force, and the lack of any further negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Against this backdrop, it is no wonder that many delegations have looked outside the traditional United Nations forums for progress, as seen in the effort to craft a nuclear ban treaty. Yet, the Disarmament Commission, as the most representative body of all 193 members, has considerable potential to demonstrate that the existing disarmament machinery can produce results.

At a time when the disarmament machinery is so often criticized as stagnant and unproductive, I must underscore that the dedication and passion of representatives should not go underappreciated. It is when this dedication and passion are translated into productivity that the machinery can truly achieve results, and we found that in our informal informals, during the intersessional period, delegations demonstrated a real commitment to moving forward.

In that regard, I wish to applaud the efforts of all delegations for working with such passion and constructive engagement during the informal plenary meetings, as well as small group discussions. The best way is to aim for constructive but modest outcomes, which would be the most pragmatic way to proceed. We look forward to results at the end of this cycle that will unite us all.

Mr. Elbaz-Starinsky (Israel): As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor, allow me to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on assuming the chairmanship and assure you of my delegation's support in the implementation of your duties.

I would like to join my Kazakh colleague in expressing my condolences to the Russian people and the Russian delegation. Terror is terror anywhere it hits, and it should be fought.

The importance of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) in the context of the disarmament machinery was outlined during the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, in 1978, when it was stipulated, among other things, that the Commission's functions should be to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament and consider elements of a comprehensive programme for disarmament. It is clear that in order to fulfil its mandate, the Commission must look at issues in a comprehensive manner and in context. The Commission's recommendations should be deeply rooted in reality and strike the necessary balance between what is hoped for and what is feasible in the light of prevailing regional and global circumstances.

In that respect, Israel is concerned about arms-control and disarmament initiatives that seek to circumvent the complexities of the multilateral arena by catering to a limited group of like-minded countries that do not represent the full range of opinions and security interests. Such initiatives will not be able to achieve standing and authority or address issues effectively. Their relevance will remain contested, owing to their deficient memberships, and their achievements will be futile.

Israel supports a vision of a Middle East free from wars, conflicts and weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. This is a vision that all inhabitants of the region should aspire to, based on the hope for peace, mutual recognition, reconciliation and the cessation of all acts of terrorism, aggression and hostility. At the same time, Israel believes that the arms-control and disarmament processes are inseparable from their contexts. They must be built on confidence-building measures that are durable and sustainable and formulated in a way that addresses the relevant circumstances, challenges and threats that prevail in the region.

In recent years, the Middle East has been further destabilized and radicalized. The erosion of State sovereignty has never been so apparent. Territories that were previously under the control of central regimes are now contested or overrun by terrorist groups to which these territories have been ceded or abandoned. In fact, the Middle East, and Syria in particular, serves as a laboratory for terrorist activity.

Unfortunately, in today's Middle East, chemical weapons are still in use. The norm against the use

of such weapons has been repeatedly violated by a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). This creates incentives for terrorist groups to acquire these capabilities and use them. There can be no greater challenge to this norm than a State party disregarding its obligations. In order for the CWC to remain a bulwark against the use and re-emergence of chemical weapons, it must demand that Syria fulfil its international obligations in their entirety, in particular the prohibition against the use of chemical weapons, and submit a full and accurate disclosure of its chemical-weapon capabilities.

Iran remains the most significant threat to the security of the Middle East and beyond. Its recent ballistic-missile tests indicate that the threat posed by Iran has not diminished but rather increased. This is a sign of its attitude to the implementation of its international obligations. Iran's clandestine activities in the nuclear domain in the past, as well as its continued acts of concealment and duplicity, in conjunction with its policy of aggression and hostility, raise a fundamental question as to whether regional players fully comprehend their duty to comply with international legal obligations.

Against this troubling backdrop, any regional arms-control process cannot be detached from reality. Israel has repeatedly emphasized that a more secure and peaceful Middle East requires all regional States to engage in a process of direct and sustained dialogue to address the broad range of regional security challenges in the region, which include all challenges and threats faced by the countries in the region individually and collectively. Such a dialogue, based on the widely accepted principle of consensus, can emanate only from within the region and address in an inclusive manner the threat perception of all regional parties in order to enhance and improve their security. Direct engagement, combined with trust and confidence-building, have always been an essential basis for the creation of a new and inclusive security paradigm in a region fraught with wars, conflicts, disintegrating national territories and human suffering.

The 1999 report of this very forum, at its fifty-fourth session, sets out the many important elements that contribute to the necessary foundation for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The report clarifies that such a complex and sensitive security architecture should be the product of the specific circumstances of the region concerned, emanate exclusively from the States within the region at hand, and be pursued by all States of the region. Furthermore, such a zone needs to be based on arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned.

Israel views with grave concern the dire effects associated with the proliferation and diversion of conventional weapons and considers this threat detrimental. Israel, individually and in collaboration with other stakeholders, actively works to counter this threat through the implementation of Security Council resolutions, international norms and standards and national tools and mechanisms.

One of the most important instruments in addressing this challenge is the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, including the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. The challenge of diversion and illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons requires our full and concerted attention and can be addressed only through our collaborative efforts, and the Programme of Action is the basis and appropriate framework for that.

Israel welcomes the successful meetings and deliberations held in New York in June 2015 on the International Tracing Instrument and the sixth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms, held in June 2016. Israel is also looking forward to the third review conference, to be held in New York in 2018. Israel views the preparatory process as vital and important and looks forward to the exchange of views in that framework. However, the Programme of Action is not, and cannot be, an alternative to national mechanisms and legislation. It does not replace bilateral and regional cooperation, which should be enhanced.

Israel views the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) as another milestone in those efforts. It requires Member States to carry out arms exports in a responsible and organized manner, thereby, hopefully, reducing the illicit transfer of arms and their diversion. As a signatory State, Israel supports the goals and purposes of the Treaty and acknowledges the important developments that have occurred in the international sphere through the establishment of the ATT. Israel looks forward to the third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, which will be held in Geneva in September.

The fifth Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, which was held in Geneva in December 2016, yielded several significant results. Israel looks forward to further in-depth discussions on the issues of improvised explosive devices and lethal autonomous weapons systems.

As this is the final year in the three-year cycle, we hope that we can progress with regard to the outcome documents in a way that will reflect both the deteriorating situation around the world and the specific approaches and needs of every State.

Mr. Hahn Choonghee (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to associate myself with the previous speakers in congratulating you, Madam Chair, on your election as Chair of this year's session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). I would also like to express my appreciation for the statement made by Mr. Kim Won-soo, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. I assure you, Madam Chair, of my delegation's full support for the work of the Commission and look forward to a productive session under your able leadership.

What we are witnessing today is a world in which old threats are becoming more entrenched and new challenges are emerging in a more complicated manner. Instead of practical arrangements designed for the reduction of nuclear arsenals, expansive military programmes are being endorsed. The threats posed by chemical weapons have not been mitigated; they still linger dangerously. The peril resulting from improvised explosive devices and other conventional weapons in conflict continue unabated. The risks arising from proliferation, including by non-State actors, are being exacerbated amid rapidly evolving technology and transboundary networks, both online and offline.

Among those, the nuclear and missile threat posed by North Korea is the most pressing issue that we collectively face. Last year alone, North Korea staged two nuclear tests and launched 24 ballistic missiles, in clear violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. Pyongyang continued its provocation this year by firing six ballistic missiles and carrying out a ground test of a new type of ballistic-missile engine — within just the past three months. Each provocation is not a mere repetition but, rather, an advance in its nuclear-weapons programme. In his New Year's address in January, the leader of North Korea declared that preparations for launching an intercontinental ballistic missile had reached their final stage. There is now a high probability that North Korea might conduct another strategic provocation this very month.

If the situation is not addressed with the sense of urgency and gravity that it warrants, the very foundation of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) at its core, will be irreparably undermined. In that regard, the Republic of Korea strongly urges North Korea to stop any further provocations and abandon all of its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, in accordance with its obligations, including in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

As the unique deliberative body of the disarmament machinery within the United Nations framework, the United Nations Disarmament Commission has an important role in nurturing various ideas on global disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Faced with the challenges I referred to and an overall stagnation within the United Nations disarmament machinery, and charged with wrapping up the work of the 2015-2017 substantive sessions, the UNDC's distinct role in deliberations is particularly important this year.

In our first Working Group discussion on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, both the nuclear haves and the have-nots, as well as both proponents and opponents of the immediate establishment of a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, should focus on reaching tangible recommendations that can build on the positive momentum towards the success of the next month's upcoming session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference. The Republic of Korea believes in a step-by-step nuclear disarmament approach that takes the security environment of every country into consideration, and is willing to work with other countries in a practical and inclusive manner so as to collectively reach a fruitful outcome during this year's session.

At the same time, we should not hinder the progress made during the past two years in Working Group II, on confidence-building measures regarding conventional

weapons. The Republic of Korea welcomes ideas for including additional items, including on transparency- and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, as a means to revitalize the current discussions in the Commission.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my hope that the Commission will emerge from its prolonged deadlock to once again serve as a valuable platform for adopting concrete guidelines and recommendations in the area of disarmament. We look forward to constructive discussions over the next three weeks.

Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka): First of all, I wish to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election, as well as the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the two Working Groups on theirs. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the tireless efforts made by Ambassador Odo Tevi of Vanuatu as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) during its 2016 substantive session, as well and the important work carried out by the two Chairs of the Working Groups, the representatives of Kazakhstan and Morocco. I also thank Mr. Kim Won-soo, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his statement, which shed light on the current issues concerning global disarmament.

We join the other delegations in expressing our profound sympathy to the delegation of the Russian Federation and to the people of that country for the tragic events that took place this morning in Saint Petersburg.

Sri Lanka attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We resolutely subscribe to the significance of the Commission, with its universal membership, as the sole specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament apparatus that considers specific disarmament issues and submits concrete recommendations to the General Assembly.

It is noteworthy that this year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission is being held just after the United Nations Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. We see the Conference as an important step in the process of taking forward multilateral nuclear-disarmament negotiations — the first multilateral negotiations on nuclear weapons since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The momentum generated by the Conference should be used to eliminate the sense of defeatism that permeates international deliberations on disarmament and to revive the diminishing interest of States with regard to general and complete disarmament.

In the same vein, it would be prudent to use that momentum to inject motivation into the Disarmament Commission, which unfortunately has not been able to achieve any concrete results during the past 16 years. It is imperative that we endeavour to produce tangible recommendations during its current substantive session. As we have advocated time and again, achieving concrete results in this sole specialized deliberative body would require political will and flexibility on the part of all Member States.

The risk posed by the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons will remain as long as nuclear weapons exist. The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. The transboundary and global impact of nuclear weapons jeopardizes the safety and security of populations. Nuclear weapons are inhumane and indiscriminate by nature. While the elimination of stockpiles by the nuclear-weapon States remains slow, continuing nuclear-weapon tests compromise peace and stability in the world. The danger of nuclear material falling into terrorist hands is another serious dimension to which we must pay attention in the current context when discussing nuclear weapons.

Strengthening the disarmament treaty regime is indispensable to ensuring a rules-based regime for nuclear disarmament. In that context, we reiterate our support for the key recommendations of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission in 2006, including the paramount value of multilateralism and the overall importance of international law in reaching the goal of disarmament. In that regard, we also wish to reiterate the centrality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the cornerstone of the international legal regime on nuclear weapons, including the 2010 NPT Action Plan and the 13 practical steps to disarmament, agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Sri Lanka believes that space exploration and the use of outer space make invaluable contributions to the advancement of humankind. While space exploration offers abundant opportunities, it is incumbent upon those who explore and use it to prevent outer space from becoming an arena for an arms race. With increased space activities, there are justifiable concerns that the

space environment is gradually becoming congested. The potential militarization and weaponization of the space environment could be a prelude to the grave danger of outer space becoming a contested area and a source of conflict.

We have long held the view that the prevention of an arms race in outer space and keeping it free of conflict are essential to averting a grave danger for international peace and security. It is our firm conviction that the early conclusion of an international agreement on the prevention of the arms race in outer space would definitely strengthen the existing legal framework. In that context, I am pleased to inform the Commission that, at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, Egypt and Sri Lanka together proposed in the First Committee a draft resolution (A/C.1/71/L.3) on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which calls for negotiations on a multilateral instrument concerning the prevention of an arms race in outer space at the Conference on Disarmament.

The category of conventional weapons is perhaps less dramatic in nature and more limited in scope as compared to weapons of mass destruction. However, owing to their wide use in internal and international armed conflicts, those weapons continue to inflict death and tremendous damage globally on a daily basis. The situation is further aggravated owing to the illicit trade and unregulated spread of conventional weapons, which has allowed non-State armed groups to use them in a manner contrary to the principles of international humanitarian law, and the victims are largely innocent civilian populations. As a country that suffered from a three-decades-long internal armed conflict, Sri Lanka is also well aware of the ramifications of the use of conventional weapons by such groups.

In that context, it is imperative that we pay attention to the implementation of, and compliance with, conventions, treaties and regulations pertaining to conventional weapons, as well as strengthen international law in that area, so as to alleviate undue suffering. That will contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

Sri Lanka values the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) as a principal instrument of international humanitarian law that strikes the right balance between the legitimate security concerns of States and complying with the principles of international humanitarian law. In that context, we welcome the ongoing discussions on lethal autonomous weapon systems under the CCW framework. Sri Lanka particularly welcomes the outcome of the 2016 Meeting of Experts, which agreed on a set of recommendations, as per the mandate agreed to at the 2015 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, which Sri Lanka had the privilege to chair.

As outgoing Chair of the 2015 Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the CCW at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, Sri Lanka introduced the annual First Committee draft resolution (A/C.1/71/L.4) on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons, which was adopted by consensus.

Disarmament education and research take on great importance as we work towards our shared goal of general and complete disarmament. In that regard, we extend our appreciation to the work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). It is essential that Member States support UNIDIR's work, thereby enabling the Institute to carry out its unique mandate effectively.

We live in a time when disarmament has assumed an unprecedented degree of importance in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which seeks to build peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, while focusing on significantly reducing all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere. The work of the Commission is extremely important to achieving those targets. We must achieve them, and the time has come to overcome the sense of defeatism in international deliberations aimed at general and complete disarmament.

Mr. Tenya Hasegawa (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that I take the floor, let me to congratulate you, Madam Chair, on chairing the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of El Salvador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

At the outset, I should like to turn to the weapons that cause the most harm to humankind: small arms and light weapons, the proliferation of which poses a serious challenge for our societies. In the case of developing countries, the destabilizing effects of those weapons when they wind up in criminal hands are well known and have contributed to worsening levels of violence through their daily use, not only for the commission of common crime but also transnational organized crime.

In its determination to combat that situation, my country participated in the sixth Biennial Meeting of States on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. On that occasion, my delegation reiterated its full commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, by noting its special relevance to international cooperation and assistance, especially in connection with border areas; strengthening national capacities; the exchange of information and experiences; and the marking and tracing of weapons, among others.

We are aware that trafficking and the diversion of arms significantly increase other illicit activities that undermine the implementation of international law, governability and peaceful and safe coexistence of our citizens, and that is why we are fully committed to implementing those instruments.

In that context, my country proposed strengthening its response capacity through the enactment of the amnesty and regularization act, which came into force in August 2016. Pursuant to that law, citizens are encouraged to hand over illegal weapons to the designated monitoring body. In the same vein, a project on the theme "Strengthening capacities for effective and transparent management of small arms and ammunition in the private security sector" was launched under the auspices of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. With this project, we are promoting good governance in the private armed security sector in Latin America and the Caribbean through the implementation of international instruments and standards, as well as technical assistance in the areas of arms control and private security regulation.

At the international level, we are party to international arms-control regimes. At the subregional Andean level, we have been implementing the Andean Plan to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and we are working on the development of a legal framework for the tracing of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. At the hemispheric level, Peru is party to the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions and the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and other Related Materials. In that regard, within the Convention's Consultative Committee and the fifth meeting of ministers responsible for public security in the Americas, Peru has proposed the establishment of an inter-American network of firearms, ammunition and explosives control entities, which is a mechanism that Peru has been setting up to support the strengthening of regional cooperation and the exchange of information, legislation and good practices.

My country attaches particular importance to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which is consistent with our objectives and commitments. In that regard, last year we deposited our Treaty ratification instrument. With that step, Peru became a State party to this important instrument. In order to implement the ATT, under the Technical Cooperation Programme of the European Union and the Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control, we approved a road map in December 2015. Its first phase includes activities to support the relevant sectors through training workshops on the scope and purpose of the Treaty, as well as the preparation of a national monitoring list and support for national arms registries, the development of practical tools to strengthen licence-granting procedures in the transfer of arms and ammunition; and inter-institutional cooperation and the identification and management of stockpiles. In addition, we intend to carry out other activities in the second phase, such as training on registering civil and military weapons; the identification of weapons and the management of weapons stockpiles; and the strengthening of the national registry.

Nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are also a matter of great interest to my country. In that regard, Peru reaffirms its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the full and equal

implementation of its three pillars. We also reaffirm the inalienable right of all States to develop research, production and peaceful use of nuclear energy without discrimination and in accordance with articles I, II, III and IV of the NPT.

Peru advocates the universalization of regimes designed to prohibit weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, I would like to put on record my appreciation for the excellent work done by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in recent years.

Peru is a party to all multilateral instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, which is one of the pillars of our foreign policy and is proof of the real will of my country to achieve international peace and security through complete disarmament. This resolute position led Peru to participate in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations to address substantively the issue of effective and specific legal measures, provisions and rules that could contribute to progress on multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament to establish and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons, pursuant to resolution 70/33. In that context, we reaffirm the urgent to need to make progress toward the primary objective of general and complete disarmament under strict international control and to achieve the prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. We have been actively participating in the negotiation of a universal legally binding instrument that prohibits nuclear weapons in a transparent, irreversible and verifiable manner within a multilaterally agreed time frame, leading to their total elimination.

With regard to the disarmament machinery, my delegation believes that the relaunching of the Conference on Disarmament is a matter of great priority that must be addressed, as it is the primary negotiating body when it comes to international disarmament and security issues. We are very concerned about the fact that, in recent years, the member States of the Conference on Disarmament have not been able to arrive at an agreement on a programme of work that deals substantively with the issues. My country urges all States members of the Conference on Disarmament to show greater political resolve to ensure the commencement of substantive work leading to the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work.

In that regard, my country wishes to express its gratitude to Ambassador Odo Tevi of Vanuatu, Chair of the Commission in 2016, for reaching an agreement on the Commission's agenda for the three-year cycle. However, we regret the lack of progress in the Disarmament Commission, and we are concerned that the respective Working Groups have not produced substantive recommendations. My delegation is convinced that this year under your leadership, Madam Chair, the Disarmament Commission will demonstrate greater political will, flexibility and cooperation among all States.

Finally, I wish to conclude by reaffirming Peru's unwavering commitment to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We will do our utmost in the work of the Commission, as we are convinced that the achievements we can make in this body will contribute to strengthening international peace and security.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a matter of pride and great responsibility for Argentina to chair the Disarmament Commission this year. Knowing you very well, Madam Chair, I am certain that you will spare no effort in guiding the work of this body towards a satisfactory outcome in this third session of the present cycle.

Let me congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the two Chairs of the Working Groups and thank the Permanent Representative of Vanuatu, Ambassador Odo Tevi, for his work during the previous session. I would also like to thank and welcome the presence of High Representative for Disarmament Kim Won-soo. We are grateful to him and his entire team for their work and dedication.

I would like to express my sympathy to the people and the Government of the Russian Federation in connection with the attack carried out in Saint Petersburg this morning. It is, regrettably, all too often that we must repeat such sentiments at the United Nations.

The Argentine delegation fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of El Salvador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. My delegation would like to add some brief comments on the matters before us.

The overall disarmament and non-proliferation scenario is rife with challenges that require the international community to work constructively and

endeavour to arrive at as broad a consensus as possible in order to achieve the ultimate objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. The Argentine delegation therefore believes that the best way to achieve concrete progress is through an inclusive and constructive dialogue that takes into account the interests and concerns of all Member States.

The deliberative nature and universal composition of the Disarmament Commission make it the forum where, on the basis of dialogue, we can arrive at agreements and break the deadlock that has mired us for more than a decade, hence the relevance of the two items originally under consideration by the Commission. By means of a frank dialogue in this deliberative body, we should be able to identify measures that allow us to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons and create trust in the measures of transparency, cooperation and peace — aspirations we all share.

In that regard, the delegation of Argentina would like to welcome the consideration of a third item this year, namely, "Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities". We believe that such measures will improve our discussions and lay the foundation for them to be fully addressed in the next cycle. For Argentina, the Disarmament Commission is the forum in which interest on disarmament issues can be maintained and revitalized as much as possible. We therefore call on all delegations to pool their efforts and adopt a pragmatic and constructive approach that is devoid of sterile polarization, in order to pave the way for a successful session. To that end, Madam Chair, you can count on the full support of the delegation of Argentina.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): We congratulate you, Madam Chair, on your election as Chair of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. That this is the final year in the Commission's three-year cycle is a matter of great significance, and I therefore assure you and the Bureau of our full support and cooperation.

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The proceedings of the Commission are taking place against a turbulent global security backdrop. The international security picture is far from encouraging. Old conflicts continue to fester as newer ones flare up. There are also signs of growing global tensions and confrontation. Not surprisingly, this fraught global political landscape has had a negative impact on the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Differences on perspectives, approaches and modalities continue to persist. The hostile use of cyber- and other emerging technologies, the development and use of lethal autonomous weapons systems and armed drones, as well as the development of advanced conventional hypersonic systems of global reach, are all worrying developments.

Most aspects of the disarmament and non-proliferation landscape do not present an optimistic picture; instead, the trends are mostly negative. The principal reason for that is the lack of progress made by the nuclear-weapon States in fulfilling their legal nuclear-disarmament obligations. That has had a negative impact on the efficacy of the non-proliferation regime. Some nuclear-weapon States are not willing to give up their large inventories of nuclear weapons or their modernization programmes, even as they pursue non-proliferation with messianic zeal. Some 13 non-nuclear-weapon States members of nuclear armed alliances continue to rely on nuclear weapons, while advocating abstinence for other States that face real and genuine security deficits, some of which are exacerbated by extravagant arms exports and nuclear cooperation.

Progress may further be impeded by certain recent developments, including some nuclear-weapon States vying to greatly strengthen and expand nuclear capabilities by outmatching potential competitors, thereby potentially starting a new nuclear arms race. That is in flagrant violation of the basic principles enshrined in first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I), according to which the nuclear-weapon States, together with other militarily significant States, have the primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament and for halting and reversing the arms race.

Another key challenge to long-held non-proliferation norms and rules is the granting of discriminatory waivers to some and making exceptions for either par or profit motives. Such waivers carry obvious proliferation risks. Those special arrangements are not only discriminatory and denote nuclear double standards, but also open up the possibility of the diversion of material intended for peaceful uses to military purposes. They contravene non-proliferation rules and also undermine regional strategic stability. Many States continue to pursue those policies of granting waivers and exemptions,

thereby contributing to insecurity and imbalances in certain regions, especially in my region of South Asia, where military expenditures are increasing and conventional-weapon inventories are expanding.

The disruption of strategic stability in South Asia through the introduction of nuclear weapons in our neighbourhood fundamentally challenged my country's security. My country was left with no option but to follow suit in order to restore strategic stability in the region and deter any form of aggression. Pakistan has made a number of proposals to keep South Asia free of nuclear weapons and missile systems. They include the simultaneous application of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards on all nuclear facilities and bilateral arrangements for reciprocal inspections, simultaneous accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, a regional comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, a zero-missile regime in South Asia and the signing of a non-aggression pact. Unfortunately, none of those proposals has ever elicited a positive response.

In his address to the General Assembly last year (see A/71/PV.11), our Prime Minister, Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, underlined Pakistan's resolve to maintain strategic stability in the region. Guided by a commitment to the principles of non-proliferation and with the aim of maintaining peace and stability in the region, our Prime Minister expressed readiness to agree on a bilateral arrangement between Pakistan and India on a nuclear-test ban. That also awaits a response. Peace and stability in South Asia cannot be achieved without resolving underlying disputes, agreeing on measures for nuclear and missile restraint and instituting conventional force balance. Our proposal for a strategic restraint regime based on those three interlocking elements remains on the table. Our conduct continues to be defined by restraint and responsibility and the avoidance of any arms race.

The existing and emerging challenges to global and regional security — and, consequently, to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament — need to be addressed holistically and comprehensively on the basis of constructive and cooperative multilateralism. For over a decade, Pakistan has been advocating the renewal and rebuilding of an international consensus on disarmament issues on the basis of the principle of equal and undiminished security for all. The international consensus that was reached about four decades ago through SSOD-I, in 1978, has been eroding ever since. The Commission, as a deliberative body with universal membership, can play an important role in evolving such a consensus.

Rebuilding the consensus is not going to be easy, given the interplay of competing perceptions, interests and approaches. However, it is becoming imperative for the Commission to give fresh impetus to it. To bolster consensus, progress is required on all four core issues of the disarmament agenda. There should be a renewed commitment to achieving nuclear disarmament within a reasonable time frame. Without such a commitment, the bargain of the non-proliferation regime will continue to erode.

For shifting the focus away from their failure to comply with their legal disarmament obligations, some nuclear-weapon States and their allies have found it convenient to preach and advocate the commencement of negotiations for a highly discriminatory and imbalanced treaty — the so-called fissile material cut-off treaty. As envisaged at present, a cut-off-only treaty would freeze the status quo to our permanent disadvantage and negatively affect strategic stability in South Asia. For Pakistan, a treaty on fissile material concerns our vital national and security interests. Among the States that posses nuclear weapons, most have either announced a unilateral moratorium on the production of fissile material or retained a level of comfort through continued national production and the conclusion of special arrangements. It is only after amassing tons of fissile material, far in excess of any foreseeable defence need, that they were converted to the cause of a cut-off treaty.

My country voted against the relevant General Assembly resolution, and we did not participate in the Group of Governmental Experts on a fissile material cut-off treaty that worked during 2014-2015. We will not participate in the 25 member high-level expert preparatory group that is being established pursuant to that resolution. The fate of that group will be no different from the so-called consensus report of the previous Group of Governmental Experts, which utterly failed to reconcile the differing views, not just in scope but also in terms of principles, objectives, definitions, verification and elements pertaining to entry into force. What could not be glossed over is the divergence of positions on almost all elements of the treaty among the 25 selected experts.

When it comes to giving legally binding assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, the position of some nuclear-weapon States and their allies is simply incomprehensible. That issue has become the most ripe issue on the Conference on Disarmament agenda and a legitimate demand of the overwhelming majority of non-nuclear-weapon States, pending progress on nuclear disarmament. Such assurances will not undermine the security of any nuclear-weapon State. The reason for their opposition to such a cost-free measure is the perceived fear of their loss of hegemonic superiority. Those nuclear-weapon States need to take guidance from the cardinal principle of SSOD-I, that is, equal and undiminished security for all at the lowest level of armament and military forces.

Pakistan has been an active participant in, and contributor to, initiatives such as the Nuclear Security Summit process and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and its implementation and assessment group. Pakistan recently ratified the 2005 amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and declared its adherence to the Guidelines for Transfers of Nuclear-related Dual-use Equipment, Materials, Software and Related Technology, also known as the Nuclear Suppliers' Group Guidelines. Our export controls are fully harmonized with those of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Australia Group. In order to give effect to those measures, a well-functioning strategic export-control division and an inter-agency oversight board overseeing the work of that division have been in place for a decade. Pakistan accords the highest priority to ensuring a fool-proof safety and security mechanism in chemical, biological and nuclear areas. Over the years, we have put in place extensive physical-protection measures, robust command-and-control structures and effective regulatory regimes.

As a manifestation of its continued commitment to the goal of non-proliferation, last month Pakistan hosted a two-day regional seminar on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). The seminar was attended by 28 participants from 16 regional countries and international organizations. It served as a platform to provide useful guidance for participating States from the region in their implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

In conclusion, let me recall that Pakistan has the requisite credentials and expertise to be part of international export-control bodies. As a first step, therefore, we have sought membership in the Nuclear Suppliers' Group. As the Group deliberates on the legal, technical and political aspects of membership by countries that are not party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), it must establish and adhere to transparent, objective and non-discriminatory criteria that ensure the equal treatment of non-NPT applicants to the Group's membership.

Mr. Tsymbaliuk (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to join previous speakers in expressing our condolences to the families of the victims of today's explosions in Saint Petersburg.

On behalf of the delegation of Ukraine, Madam Chair, allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your respective elections. We look forward to a continued discussion on recommendations for achieving the goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and on practical confidence-building measures in the area of conventional weapons. We believe that the United Nations Disarmament Commission continues to play an important role in the overall United Nations disarmament machinery through its deliberations on specific issues relating to nuclear weapons and conventional arms.

Ukraine has consistently supported a multilateral approach to disarmament and the international security agenda. While recognizing the difficulties associated with implementing existing international treaties and bringing new ones into force, we reaffirm our commitment to maintaining and strengthening the current disarmament machinery and international cooperation so as to reinforce the existing international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It is essential that both non-nuclear and nuclear-weapon States be involved in that process.

We share the view that the use of nuclear weapons is the most serious threat that humankind faces today. Ukraine demonstrated a proactive approach in that area by abandoning its nuclear capability and acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in November 1994, as well as by taking concrete steps to eliminate the use of highly enriched uranium for civilian purposes through the removal of all of its existing stocks from its national territory, in March 2012.

Even after having been affected by the Russian military aggression in, and occupation of, its territories, Ukraine continues to regard the NPT as a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We provide comprehensive support for its effective implementation, further strengthening and universalization.

Ukraine consistently stands for reducing nuclear arsenals, ending the modernization of nuclear weapons and decreasing holistically nuclear weapons' role in States' military and strategic doctrines. We must re-emphasize that the historic decision of Ukraine to renounce its nuclear weapons was primarily based on the clear international security guarantees provided by the Budapest Memorandum on security assurances, signed by Ukraine, the United States, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation. We stand by the position that the Memorandum is valid and should be upheld by all of its signatory States.

Ukraine supports the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) with a view to its entry into force constituting a tangible stride towards attaining the noble goal of a safe and peaceful world free of nuclear weapons. We call upon all States that have yet to sign or ratify the CTBT, in particular the remaining States listed in annex 2, to do so without delay.

We also continue to support commencing negotiations on and concluding a fissile-material cut-off treaty, which is essential both to constraining nuclear proliferation and advancing the goal of nuclear disarmament. Ukraine urgently calls for finding common ground on the issue of existing fissile-material stocks and on the immediate commencement of negotiations on such a treaty within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. In that respect, we fully support the establishment of the high-level expert preparatory group and look forward to the outcome of its work.

As an advocate of maintaining peace and security at the lowest possible level of armaments, including conventional ones, Ukraine recognizes the important role of conventional arms control, including at the regional and subregional levels, and, accordingly, welcomes all respective measures in that area. Ukraine's consistent commitment to strengthening the effectiveness of confidence-building measures also remains unchanged. Ukraine fully shares the concerns that the illicit trade, spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons pose a serious threat to security and stability in the world. We therefore consider the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as an important tool in global efforts to combat that threat. We support the proper implementation of Programme of Action, as well as that of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons by all States.

Ukraine attaches particular importance to ensuring effective export-control procedures in the sphere of conventional arms that meet all standing international requirements. Ukraine strictly adheres to the respective resolutions and decisions of the Security Council, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the international control regime established under the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies.

Ukraine also welcomes the entry into force and the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) as a comprehensive legally binding instrument for establishing common standards in that area, thereby preventing the proliferation of conventional arms. We continue to co-sponsor the ATT draft resolution in the framework of the First Committee.

The issue of the illicit transfer, accumulation and misuse of conventional arms should remain among the priorities of the international community, especially in the context of regional security. Russian military aggression against Ukraine, with the use of regular military forces armed with modern types of conventional armaments and ammunition, has significantly damaged the existing system of conventional arms control. The Russian Federation continues its massive transfers of military goods to our territory, in both Crimea and eastern Ukraine. That deliberately destabilizes the security of not only the subregion, but of Europe as a whole. We have no right to underestimate such facts, and we should tackle the issue of the destabilizing accumulation and misuse of conventional arms with the highest level of the responsibility.

Mrs. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba fully supports the statement made by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as the statement delivered by the delegation of El Salvador

on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

We congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission during this year's substantive session. We extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau and to the Chairs of the Working Groups. We wish them all success in the exercise of their responsibilities, and we assure them of our cooperation. We hope that in this final year of the present cycle of discussions, the Commission will make substantive progress and that its deliberations will lead to agreement on concrete recommendations on the agenda items, with a view to their submission to the General Assembly.

Taking advantage of the situation created by the first session of the United Nations Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons leading towards their total elimination, held last week, we reiterate the call on the nuclear-weapon States and others protected by the so-called nuclear umbrella to show political will and commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons, and to take the first step in that direction during the work of this session of the Disarmament Commission.

It is alarming that some States continue to modernize their arsenals and to develop, including through subcritical trials, new types of nuclear weapons, thereby trying to legitimize their possession through a policy of nuclear deterrence and a dubious concept of security. It is also worrying that they continue to deploy nuclear weapons in the territories of States that do not possess them. Moreover, all of that is occurring in clear breach of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in particular article VI thereof, and the agreements reached at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences.

We regret that three countries blocked consensus to agree on the draft final document of the ninth NPT Review Conference, against the will and the determination to move forward shown by the overwhelming majority of States parties to the Treaty. The failure of that Conference reaffirmed the urgent need to initiate multilateral negotiations, within the framework of the United Nations, for the prompt finalization of a convention providing for the prohibition of all nuclear weapons, with a view to their total elimination.

We express our displeasure at the failure to comply with the agreement to hold an international conference for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The establishment of such a zone would in particular be a significant contribution to achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament and a momentous step forward in the peace process in that region. We urge once again that the conference be held without further delay.

In view of the ongoing serious threat posed by the mere existence of nuclear weapons to the very survival of the human species, we reiterate the call to take advantage of all possible forums, including the sessions of the Commission, as well as the work of its Working Group on recommendations to achieve the objective of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, to move towards the prohibition and total elimination of such weapons.

We recall the convening by the General Assembly, with the support of the vast majority of Member States, of a high-level international conference, no later than 2018, to review progress on nuclear disarmament. That meeting could help to identify ways and means of eliminating nuclear weapons in the shortest time possible, with the aim of agreeing on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons over a specific period of time.

We would also like to recall that the commemoration of 26 September at the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons offers an important opportunity to raise awareness in the international community of the danger posed by those weapons.

It is time that nuclear disarmament ceased to be a postponed and neglected target. Our country has reiterated that the only guarantee to prevent the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by States or individuals would be their absolute prohibition and elimination, under strict international control. In that regard, we consider the adoption of a prohibition treaty to be an intermediate step only and that negotiations in that vein should lead to the adoption of a comprehensive convention establishing the elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified period of time and under strict international verification. That would be the only way to ensure full, effective, irreversible, transparent and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

In turn, we reaffirm the inalienable right of States to research, produce and peacefully use nuclear

energy without discrimination and in accordance with articles I, II, III and IV of the NPT. We also recall the commitment of all parties to the Treaty to facilitate participation in the exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

With regard to the item on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, we consider that such voluntary measures are a way to strengthen international peace and security and must be adopted in strict compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, while respecting the specific security concerns of States. We recognize the contribution of confidence-building measures to disarmament and arms control, but we reiterate that they are not an alternative to disarmament.

We also reiterate the contribution to confidence-building of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, adopted at the second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Havana in January 2014. We demand that the Proclamation, which reflects the principles of interacting with one another with respect and fellowship, be respected. Under the Proclamation, and bearing in mind that the imposition of military bases without the consent of the peoples concerned undermines confidence-building in the area of conventional weapons, we demand the return of territory illegally occupied by the naval base in Guantanamo, against the will of the people of Cuba.

Finally, our delegation reiterates its readiness to work actively with a view to concluding this cycle of the Disarmament Commission with specific recommendations on both agenda items.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I am pleased to express my congratulations to you, Madam Chair, on your election to lead the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We also congratulate the Chairs of the two Working Groups, Bulgaria and Venezuela, on their elections.

We align ourselves with the statements made by the representatives of Indonesia, Cameroon and Qatar on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of African States and the Group of Arab States, respectively.

We wish to express our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation following the attacks that took place recently in Saint Petersburg.

The Sudan will participate positively and actively in the deliberations of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. My delegation wishes to stress the importance of the role of the Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations disarmament machinery, as the negotiations therein can give rise to decisions and recommendations applicable to all, thereby allowing the United Nations disarmament machinery to make progress and strengthen peace and security throughout the world. Peace and security in the world will be impossible as long as weapons of mass destruction continue to threaten humankind as a whole. It is regrettable to see the setbacks in the United Nations disarmament machinery that have occurred in the past decade.

The pursuit of the development of nuclear, biological and chemical technologies by developed States and the rivalry among them are dangerous, even if they are undertaken in the name of preventive deterrence and strengthening national security, despite all international treaties and documents that prohibit such practices. My delegation stresses the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation for the achievement of international peace and security. We are concerned when the nuclear-weapon States do not live up to their commitments in that regard.

We note the failure of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which did not yield an outcome document because of the inability to reach consensus on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which could lead to the worsening of regional and international peace and security. We invite those States that have not yet ratified the Pelindaba Treaty to do so as soon as possible. We reaffirm the full, unconditional and non-selective right of all States to the peaceful use of nuclear power, as well as its use for scientific research.

The Sudan is an active partner in international disarmament efforts. It was one of the first States to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and was at the forefront of efforts aimed at making Africa a zone free of nuclear weapons,

pursuant to the Treaty of Pelindaba. We were also an early signatory to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, to which we acceded in 2004. Furthermore, the Sudan has supported the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and participated in all regional workshops and international conferences on the issue.

In addition to the Sudan's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, the Sudan attaches particular importance to the issue of small arms and light weapons because, like many other small countries in the world, it has been suffering from the proliferation of such weapons, which have exacerbated regional conflicts and led to thousands of deaths every year. They have also been linked to economic issues, which themselves have been complicated by natural disasters such as desertification and drought as the result of climate change. With the shrinkage of pasture land and the decrease in water sources, the proliferation of weapons has become a sign of power in the eyes of those residing in our region. Therefore, because we understand the danger of the phenomenon, my Government is committed to combating these types of weapons.

Furthermore, the Sudan has been active and present in all international and regional forums and has been active in making its own national efforts through our national office for small arms and light weapons. We are convinced that there is a link between the spread of these weapons and organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism.

The Sudan is at the forefront of multidisciplinary efforts by the League of Arab States, the Group of African States and other regional organizations — and in bilateral efforts with neighbouring countries — aimed at protecting borders and ensuring customs control. When these efforts were reviewed, we noted that combating the spread of these weapons must begin with the manufacturing countries and not the countries that are merely suffering from the phenomenon. Manufacturing countries must commit to not providing these weapons to groups or individuals. This is both necessary and vital. Technical assistance must be provided to the countries affected by this scourge, in accordance with Chapter II of the United Nations Programme of Action.

Lastly, we all agree that the 2006 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development stressed the interlinkages between development and armed conflict. This must be taken into account when the Security Council takes up conflicts in developing countries and peacekeeping operations. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes must take priority over other matters in dealing with existing conflict zones. That is also why it is important to emphasize the development dimension, since the common element in many conflicts is a lack of resources and development, together with such natural disasters as desertification and drought resulting from climate change.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker on the list for this meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

I shall now give the floor to those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I would like to remind delegations that the number of interventions in exercise of the right of reply for any delegation on any item at a given meeting is limited to two and that the first intervention should be limited to 10 minutes and the second to five minutes.

Mr. Robatjazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am taking the floor to exercise my delegation's right of reply.

I reject the allegations made against Iran and the lies told about it by the representative of the Israeli regime. It is no surprise that there are no limits to the ability of the officials of the Israeli regime to lie and engage in disinformation campaigns against Iran in order to divert attention from the threats emanating from Israel's destabilizing actions and policies in the Middle East. The Israeli regime's entire history is filled with major acts of aggression against its neighbours and other countries in the Middle East and beyond — at least 14 times since 1948.

Furthermore, Israel continues to flout all international regimes governing weapons of mass destruction by refusing to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Israel is therefore the only obstacle to establishing a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Indeed, nuclear weapons in the hands of that regime pose the most serious threat to the security of all States in the Middle East, as well as to the non-proliferation regime.

The representative of the Israeli regime spoke of the need to comply with and respect international obligations. He should remember that his regime has arrogantly and flagrantly violated at least 86 resolutions — I repeat, 86 resolutions — adopted by the Security Council between 1948 to 2016, as a result of Israel's acts of aggression and occupation, as well as its well-documented atrocities and war crimes against the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples. That appalling track record affords no moral standing or credibility for the Israeli regime to render judgment about others' compliance with Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we wish to express our sympathy and solidarity with the leadership, Government and people of our friend the Russian Federation, and to offer our deepest condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims.

The representative of the Israeli entity made a statement this morning that tramples on every norm, surprising us with its hypocrisy and lies and making accusations against other States. As we know, people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. We are all aware that the Israeli entity has introduced terrorism, including nuclear, chemical, biological and radiological terrorism to our region. It provides every type of aid, weapons, munitions, intelligence and technology to terrorist groups in Syria, in particular Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front and their affiliates, as well as toxic chemicals and training on how to use them. As is well known, that regime violates all Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism.

All reports, investigations and studies reaffirm that in the Middle East the Israeli protectorate is the only country that possesses a nuclear arsenal. It also has the largest arsenal of chemical and biological weapons, as well as their means of delivery, with a range that goes well beyond the Middle East. International reports have also confirmed beyond any doubt that Israel has used biological and chemical weapons many times against the peoples in the region — in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine — and that it has been using white phosphorus and uranium from 1948 to the present day.

In the firm belief that the use of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, is unacceptable and unethical and to be condemned, and in the importance of establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, and with the goal of proving to the whole world its commitment to standing against any use of chemical weapons, my country acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention. In 2003, while serving as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, we proposed a draft resolution aimed at creating a zone in the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. However, at the time Syria's efforts were hindered by a country that is influential in the Security Council and that threatened to abort the draft resolution.

In his ridiculous, theatrical statement, the representative of the Israeli tried desperately to mislead the Disarmament Commission by making false and unfounded claims designed to distract attention from the dangers of Israeli nuclear weapons, from Israel's lack of respect for the resolutions on nuclear non-proliferation and from the fact that it has yet to become party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and has not put its installations under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Moreover, Israel has refused to become a party to treaties prohibiting weapons of mass destruction, whether chemical or biological. As is usual when Israel's position is fragile and weak, we see the representatives of its regime propagate falsehoods, confuse issues, reverse the truth completely and evade accountability concerning the crimes and attacks committed by the regime.

It is a well-known fact that Israeli officers are responsible for illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We only have to look at the zones of tension in the world and we can see that the illegitimate weapons traffickers there are Israeli.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.